

## **Trees**

### **Trees**

There are few trees upon the dessert.

There have always been many trees where I have lived, except when I lived in New York City. In Eugene we are surrounded by trees. On the Island, trees are endemic.

At age 67, in the year two thousand, during the fall, I planted twelve, two to three year old, fruit trees in the garden on the Island. The next year most of them bloomed, some profusely. Some yielded fruit, some did not. Two apple trees came with canker, and were severely cut back (almost to the ground), relocated for observation, were also replaced by one of the same and one different. And two new trees were added in the hopes of pollinating others. The trees are watered regularly in the summer months, they are fertilized if they appear wan.

The trees are becoming individuals, each taking its own shape, and each requiring its own special attentions. This coming fall (2002) most of them will require pruning, whereas last year only a few were pruned.

Ten of the original twelve trees came in pots from the nursery; two arriving later were bare rooted. The two bare-rooted ones were a Golden plum with what appeared as insufficient roots, and a Jonagold apple with a profusion of long hair like roots. A Red Free apple, and a Cox Orange Pippin apple, were the cankerous trees. The cankers showed the following spring; in the Cox Orange as evidenced by an atrophying leader, dead brown appearing with an obvious ring at the base of the dead part; in the Red Free as evidenced by what first appeared as a bruise in the area near the base above the pot, where a person would pick up the tree in the nursery to move it, which developed into an area of dead trunk nearly half the diameter of the tree; the latter tree appeared wan without remedy. The nursery replaced the Cox Orange and replaced the Red Free with a Liberty; I didn't want to wait for a replacement Red Free, being an older fellow without much time remaining, having lost one year to canker. At that time I also added the Bosc pear as a pollinator for the two other pears, and another Japanese plum, Santa Rosa (which doesn't sound very Japaneasy, any more than our Paloma gas water heater sounds Japaneasy), as a pollinator (vice versa) for the Golden plum, which the nursery claimed was a self-pollinator (although it bloomed profusely, it did not produce a single fruit).

We now have a total of sixteen trees. The two cankerous ones lopped off near their base where a shoot had manifested itself, severed beneath the cankerous part, and wrapped with saran wrap covering a heavy dose of Bordeaux mixture. These trees have been

## **Trees**

relocated across from the others in the garden (for observation) They have put out vigorous growth from the existing shoots (no blossoms). Their replacements have bloomed and fruited, the Cox Orange once again showing suspect areas on its trunk which have been treated with Bordeaux mixture wrapped in Saran wrap. Being somewhat paranoid about canker now I also treated a suspect area on the Red Gravenstein in the same manner.

To summarize: Four Plum Trees; two Italian Plum (or Prune) one of which is growing very vigorously which put out a few blooms the first year, none the second, and the other, which put out a few blooms the first year and none the second, and which was relocated to allow placement of the Santa Rosa plum next to the Golden plum; it is also growing well although smaller than the other. The Golden Plum is a very very vigorously growing tree which bloomed well, with one fruit setting in the second year (if you'll remember, this was the tree scantily bare-rooted tree). The Santa Rosa was a rather wan looking thing which did bloom, also setting a single fruit, but as this year has progressed the tree is looking happier with larger new growth. Three Pear Trees: A Bartlett, which bloomed profusely the first year without fruiting; it came with a proliferation of Blister Mite, which required dormant spraying in early spring. It once again bloomed without producing fruit, but with little appearance of Blister Mite. An Anjou pear which bloomed lightly the first year, and heavily the second did not produce any fruit. And, the third a pollinator, or so we imagined, the Bosc pear bloomed well, and produced fruit. Nine Apple Trees: the Red Gravenstein, a vigorous tree, already mentioned, which bloomed and produced fruit the first year, but did not bloom the second; understood to be a biennial. The two Cox Orange previously described, the new one blooming and producing fruit, but being watched for canker development, not particularly vigorous, the Red Free previously described, the Liberty previously described which has bloomed well and produced fruit; a leggy tree. A Bramley, a leaner in the pot that required support, but seems vigorous, has bloomed and produced fruit both years. The Jonagold previously mentioned, which bloomed with one fruit the first year, but despite all its roots seemed laggard, received severe pruning (too leggy), bloomed the second year with one fruit again, but much healthier looking. A Golden Russet produced lots of blooms both years looked wan during the first, producing a few apples, responding to fertilizer with more blooms during the summer. The second year, lots of blooms and lots of fruit, and a healthier looking tree. And last, the Dolgo Crab, a pollinator which has bloomed well both years, producing more fruit the second, and

## **Trees**

a grower, healthy. The swampy area next to the garden has several Pacific Crab apples which bloom profusely.

I have planted trees before, of the evergreen type, most of which have gone their own way without much attention, planted amidst large Douglas Firs so as to be barely noticeable. I have been more affined to the Firs because they have been around longer and are more prominent, most of them older than myself. Perhaps the best looking of all the planted trees is the Noble Fir. Two Sequoia Redwoods were ringed by squirrels, The Ponderosa Pine destroyed by snow, the Two Port Orford Cedars struggling, The Two Dawn Redwoods struggling, the five crossed Port Orfords struggling, the Two Cryptomyria Japonicas, one barely hanging in there, the other growing well, the Deodora Cedar growing too well, severely pruned. An Austrian Pine doing reasonably well, A True Fir doing reasonably well, Pencil Cedars knocked over, propped up from the snow, the fate suffered by the Scotch Pine, too heavy to prop up, disposed. A Japanese Pine broken by snow, finally exiting. Most of the more exotic evergreens grow too fast, putting out limbs that cannot support the weight of the heavy wet snows that come maybe once a year, these trees also do not put out sufficient root systems to hold up the tree in the soggy winter soils west of the cascades; easily toppled.

Trees are a big part of my consciousness; I do consider them as intimates to which I can speak. They offer a comfort which I am not particularly able to obtain from my fellow human. I miss them when they are gone, and suffer their various fates.

The trees in the garden are special because they flower and produce fruit. The Red Gravensteins and the Bramleys of the first year were large juicy fruits, very special. This year there will be Bramleys again, plus Golden Russet, Liberty, Cox Orange, a Jonagold, and Crab Apple; perhaps two plums if they mature, and a few Bosc pear.

In planting these trees I took considerable care to provide them with adequate drainage. We need to stop growing other plants too close to their roots, the pansies and poppies must be brought under control, as well as borage, snap dragons, nasturtiums etc. AND WEEDS!

### **STOP!**

October 4 2002

A 'dream' this morning, a dream beyond the presumptions of language to express, to capture, to interpret. A seeming prescience, of a future unlike what we know now. That future was not visionary, was not utopian, although one would, in this now, imagine it to be so. It might be an understandable dream, one that,

## **Trees**

those who earnestly seek a peaceful world, might dream. But the dream did not involve peace as much as it did something else, an intelligence beyond what we experience now.

One might suppose the human brain relieved of its daily concerns through sleep, might actually, while at rest, continue with a modified cogitation upon certain deeper significances that characterize a conscious life. One might suppose an attempt at the integration of the many scattered, sometimes observable related and unrelated human activities that characterize that conscious life.

One might also imagine a leap beyond into another reality (a future) where human intelligence and actions had evolved into a different modus operandi than the observed and interpreted one.

I have speculated often upon the realization that life, in general, does not have any readily identifiable purpose. I have also speculated that human life, an individual human life, has the ability to assign purpose to its own existence.

Because a human life is so able to speculate could mean that there are still other possibilities than those we now experience. Thus the integration while one sleeps.

I have often imagined a continuum, and a 'holding action' as generation after generation follows along the continuum. The continuum is time unremitting, perhaps a gift, a gift of millennia, wherein a particular life form has an opportunity to evolve into something quite different than it is now, perhaps amazingly different, something that presently would evoke, "You have to be dreaming". And the 'holding action' is the holding onto what we have already gained through that evolutionary continuum, not losing it with the birth of each new generation, not having to regain it with the incidence of each new generation.

Allow me to ask you, 'Can you imagine a life without conceits, and without the preoccupation of an afterlife'. And further, let me ask you, 'Would you be willing to exchange those conceits and that preoccupation for a completely peaceful purposeful existence for the duration of your natural life on this planet (with no promise of afterlife, and with no particular recognition of the individual)?'

We would answer these questions in the now with "Pie In The Sky" or "Impossible!" And those would be the correct answers. The answers that one would expect from an honest appraisal of a species that was leading a purposeless existence. The only identifiable purpose to a human life that we might presently entertain is to consciously attribute to his life the knowledge of a 'Holding Action' within an evolutionary continuum. The concept of a 'holding action' conjures a position of hope beyond what we can know, and a possibility that things could change through the gift

## **Trees**

of time. We cannot know the realities of the eventualities that we might imagine, but we can entrust to the generations that follow, a dedicated purpose, to evolve beyond what we know now. There are many reasons to do so; given those reasons, the motivation exists to make the conscious attempt to do so. (I might analogize herein something I read in the *Junkman Smiles* wherein it is related that the Chinese of that time, in digging their salt wells, might not necessarily achieve their aim in a single generation, but would succeed eventually through persistent effort through more than one generation [This gave {assigned} purpose, it demonstrated faith in a certain endeavor producing a given result, while also implying a knowledge of an attainable existence beyond]).

I do not suggest that we might be able to influence evolutionary processes through ‘mind over matter’, but I do suggest conscious choices will lead us in a direction that might favor an evolutionary development equally favorable to that which accords our choices.

“Improbable!” you will say. “Impossible!” others will exclaim. ‘Only GOD has a say in these matters’. And I might agree, given what we are able to observe of mankind in the now.

And I might have to acknowledge the “pie in the sky” dreaming as clear evidence of lunacy. And that conceits and the affirmation of an afterlife are the true reality, and that there is no ‘holding action’ along a continuum, that there is only this bleak purposeless existence on this reeking planet with all of its mindless fornicating, and equally purposeless strife and bloodletting. And that one would not want to be compromised by answering certain questions with regard to conceits and afterlife, wherein it might be shown that one prefers a purposeless existence full of strife and bloodletting.

We have grown so accustomed to the strife and bloodletting that although we can desperately imagine existence without it, we succumb to its persuasions, and perpetuate it through mindless fornication. We live in a state of constant apprehension with regard to the precariousness of our lives within the human environment. We have been and continue to be a violent species bent upon more violence as a *modus operandi*. That is what we practice within the continuum; that is what we practice as a ‘holding action’, not against the clear and present dangers inherent to other forms of life, but as a means of controlling other human life (the clear and present danger of *homo sapiens*) (We can easily imagine something non-existent in *Jurassic park*, but cannot put huge teeth and immense claws into an existing overpowering human shape, however true it may be).

Of course life, human life, does not have to make any sense, it does not have to accord any argument that favors a different

## **Trees**

modus operandi. If it is truly believed that there is no purpose to life but what we assign to it, then why choose one purpose and not the other; why even consider the notion of 'favorable'. If each individual is left to assigning to his life a purpose, what would be the favorable human climate in which to conduct the purposeful existence? A reasonably hypothetical query? While it is our conceit that wishes to prevail, it is the other's that also wishes to prevail, the human climate regulated by the convenience or inconvenience of the imaginary Golden Rule.

Of course I do not wish to imply that human life consists entirely of strife and blood-letting. That would misconstrue what we are able to observe. I do wish to imply, without offering substantial proof, only that which each will honestly answer, that we live with an apprehension of the strife and bloodletting (albeit violence). We perceive that any amount of uncontrolled activity by humanity has the potential of reaching the individual, thereby imperiling his life. I believe this is quite easily understood and does not require further elaboration. It might give credence to a 'dream' that attempts to resolve the apprehensions of the alarmed, perplexed uncertainty found in the conscious existence.

Having used language as best I am able to do so at this juncture (all other considerations conceded), I have attempted to reveal the content of a 'dream' that I assume to have arisen in response to certain realities that are not resolved in the conscious state; realities that seem irresolvable in that state; realities so pressing in nature, and so inevitably part of human life, and continued existence, that the 'dream' was used as a vehicle to bring rest to the otherwise troubled consciousness, and hence unconsciousness. That consciousness resumes each day where it ended on the previous day, in a constant state of apprehension, occupied with thoughts of the inevitability of the condition and the madness of trying to discover a solution (not unlike the perpetually anxious monkey in the cage described in *The Self And The Other*). These are the assumptions to which my intellect gravitates.

In my ordinary wakeful state, as some of my writings will attest, I quite often explore myriad avenues of expression, to say these same things in a more complicated manner, full of ironies, cynicism, and bitter satire, and with the most abject recognition of the impossibility of ever finding a solution to any turmoil connected to, and inherent to human behavior. In the waking state, the desperation of the anxious monkey drives me to remorselessly confront the impossible, time and time again.

The 'dreaming' may indeed become an indices of lunacy, plainly and simply, given our true knowledge and understanding of reality, that is measured and known through the status quo; it may also

## **Trees**

represent an ongoing search that dismisses all the temporizings, lip-services, equivocations, deviousness, confidence pedaling, rhetoric and sundry other obviations of the truth found in the daily trafficking and abuse of language; not to include the natural inefficacies and imperfections associated with language (and the creation and reliance upon language) as we have come to recognize them.

Next

While one might think of a dream as something unrealistic (untenable), I do believe my dreaming was influenced by what I believe I know, what is stored of my realizations and opinions with regard to them. The dream did not envision a cloying brotherhood of man lacking flesh and blood. As a matter of fact it did not envision a brotherhood at all. The dream was more realistic and practical. Yes, in the sense that it involved a future, the future, rather than the present, is a clear indication that there is something lacking, something unobtainable, in the present; and that a wished for corrective was applied to the future. But somehow the dream accounted the improbability of making something new out of the same old ingredients. It recognized the need for a modification in the ingredients, a modification brought about through an evolutionary process, hopefully an irreversible process. The dream recognized that the species has had enough of the formative, the jungle approach to survival. In theory, the idea of civilization had arrived.

One might question his assumptions with regard to his hypothesis with respect to what promotes adaptation, natural selection, hence evolution. One might perceive it a blind process, completely lacking in purpose, only motivated by opportunity, the opportunity to 'score', with no 'higher' purpose. How does the idea of civilization accommodate the opportunistic nature of adaptation and natural selection. Is there anything favorably opportunistic about civilization itself? If there existed a true civilization rather than only an idea of civilization, then perhaps adaptation to it would become the natural order of things. But as it is, at birth, each individual is not naturally civilized, rather the opposite.

However the newborn is something that can be influenced, or molded, either through fear, bribery, and/or the good-good feelings of 'love', and sometimes by the persuasions of reason and logic. This part of the process of 'civilizing' has proven unreliable because of the infinite number of variables.

'Remove the variables' one might conjecture.

As a species we have attempted to remove some of the variables through the creation of Institutions. The Institutions represent our intent to apply what has been learned over time to the molding of

## **Trees**

the new arrivals. Through the Institutionalization of the molding process we have removed some of the variables. In these Institutions we attempt to emphasize the importance of civilization by citing its benefits over the 'law of the jungle'. We so strongly believe in the value of these benefits that we make a great effort to perpetuate them through our Institutions.

We cannot remove the variables entirely, either in the form of the inculcator or those being inculcated, each of whom are individuals. In democratic societies we have chosen to recognize the individual. As a result each individual represents a variable. In some less democratic societies the individual is suppressed, thereby removing some of the variables, producing more 'automatons'. Regarding the latter, one might wonder, 'Are they more civilized?'

These are amongst the more usual debates one encounters as he tries to imagine a more utopian outlook, that is, attempting to achieve an objective through reason, without dreaming. There have been attempts at Utopias as there have been attempts at Democracies; perhaps the two appearing coterminous to the individual.

The most obvious question arises, "How much 'freedom' does one accord the individual?" If the individual is not placated in his perceived needs, can any system of civilizing be made to function beyond what we do to enforce it during any given lifetime? It is a crucial question, if one imagines what it is we need to do for all to pull in the same direction, to produce that favorable condition, which would make the newborn more receptive to the 'civilization' we wish to promote, essentially an altered state, perhaps achieved through some 'evolutionary' or developmental process. We need to make use of the methodology usually encountered in opportunism.

We assume that opportunism functions as a means to gain certain gratifications. Gratifications come in many forms, so many in fact, it would seem impossible to account them all, from Ding Dongs to "Living Happily Ever After". It would seem that some of these must be sacrificed in order to assure for a continued pursuit of other gratifications. Sacrificing anything implies choice, knowledge of consequences that serve practical ends; more assured survival, for example. A system of gratified individuals living in perpetuity. This would be more possible if there were fewer individuals who encountered each other infrequently.

From a dream to this complicated set of conditions. Often we corrupt our dreams with too much of the ordinary stuff of life. Dreams are perhaps less complicated in that they have some more or less singular objective to fulfill. Whereas in real life, that is, in the awakened state, we are forced to realize there are so many of



## **Trees**

us; the hopelessness of dreams becomes readily apparent. Would we better achieve our objective if we encumbered all individuals in chains?

And it is in this hopeless climate that the bad guys flourish, because opportunity flourishes; that is, there are so many ends to be served, those ends often occupied with dire survival, that the overloaded and milling environment obscures all subtle, but no less opportunistic, 'self-serving' activity. Number, as we see, in numbers of individuals needing, promotes an intense climate of self-serving. That is so because the limits of any resource are quickly achieved with large numbers, hence the intensity of the self-serving activity to survive. Unavoidable. In these conditions 'altruism' or species conscience is not operative.

What might be possible conceptually, with one set of numbers, conceptually becomes impossible with another set of numbers. To even imagine civilizing a redundant population of consumers requires more than a dream. Chains?

Even as I write these words I realize how little I contribute to the ends so easily conjured. Because I realize the limits I place upon the contribution I would make in the atmosphere of hopelessness that I feel, I sense an inevitability to the failure of the enterprise. Words are not enough! I cannot sit on the sidelines proselytizing the good life without incurring the goad to supply substance (pudding).

Next

One must step backwards, that is, remove himself from his ponderings; he must envision himself as a solitary thing, living within his own encasement of vitals. He must know that his is a precarious existence, and all that unfolds from him exists precariously. The realities he espouses are his realities, and the shape of the universe he envisions is his own unique shape, and that before he arrived it did not exist, and after he leaves it will cease to exist. This is the most difficult truth to know and accept.

All the huggings and embracings of others exist as phantoms, however close they may otherwise seem, even as constant companions. Unfettered they reserve always the right to disappear. It is in one's conceit these disappearing phantoms would carry on with his realities, but once again the hard truth reveals only his vain presumption.

Each is a solitary existence full of these conceits and vain presumptions. When we are no longer here, those will also disappear, no longer a burden to oneself or the other.

There it was, "Love Always", not to be taken literally. At best one might go to the well in a desperate moment to draw some buoyant

## **Trees**

fluidity to bathe his lonely aching soul, only to discover a fetid decayed sump; one abandoned to languish in the insubstantiality of "Love Always". Words. What you read are words. What are words? What do they mean, what do they convey? Do they convey good intentions, a transient sentiment? They exist to be misinterpreted. "Love Always"; it has been writ. What does the writ mean?

Have I ever written "Love Always"? Never. It would be such a simple thing to do; perhaps that was it, it was such a simple thing to do, that one did it, and I was such a simple-minded person that I misinterpreted the simplicity of a gesture that didn't mean anything. But it did mean something, it meant something to me. To the other it was a gesture of warmth perhaps, without any more to it than that; still a gesture of warmth. With how much sincerity? Do we have a right to question something so freely given? I still possess the paper upon which it was written. I treasure the words from whom they were written, in my simple-minded way; words from a pretty young woman. Remember what I have said about phantoms, and about realities, and about realities ceasing when one is no longer here. "Love Always" will cease; I cannot will this phantom unto another.

To me the word "Love" was a word one used reservedly. There was no substitute to be found in any other single word for what one might truly feel as he uttered such a word. But I have uttered the word unadvisedly, when some urgency mistaken for a heartfelt need to render such an expression made it so. Have I come to regret the use of the word, used in such a circumstance? I have, because it has diluted the meaning. Shades of meanings, all retained in one four letter word. But that does not mean in another circumstance the intensity of feelings escaped the mere utterance of such a word. "Love Always"; perhaps a repository of eventualities should others fail; a trail of "Love Always" left behind by a pretty young woman. Ta Ta?

I have reservedly written, "Remembering you fondly". I have read elsewhere, instead of "Love Always", a passive projection, "Love Us". I quite easily write with feelings, 'Lots Of Love', to my granddaughter. I am writing so to a phantom who lives far away, who is growing and changing in my absence, but who also writes, "I Love You". Some day the phantom spirit that so moves her will become self-conscious about the use of the word, becoming reserved; the phantom will cease to flow freely. But she too is a solitary existence; she will need to go to the well. There must be something in the well for her to want to go there. What!?, grandfatherly love!

## **Trees**

What follows is only slightly removed from these cogitations. It has to do with "Context". As we might recognize it, the 'Context' might be construed as the Status Quo". If a person does not reflect the Status Quo, it might be construed he is out of Context, he might even be considered 'crazy', crazy enough to be Institutionalized, removed from the one Context and placed in another, full of out-of-context others. The reality that lives within that other cannot be understood, but only marginally within the context of the psychobabble that exists to describe it within the context of the status quo. "He has lost his grip on reality; he has become dysfunctional". That is, he is out of context, he is a misfit in time and place, reality is as we know it is unrecognizable in him, or to him. In The Now!!!

He speaks of prescient dreams and this repository of "Love Always", because it is the only thing that means anything to him in a cold indifferent world. He is not interested in the cold reality, but in the warm phantom. We presume we have the right to enforce upon him a context in which he has found nothing. It is important for us to find him crazy, to enhance the security of our contextual lives, whether they persist with or without love. All of the past contextual lives have brought us to this one. We cannot go backward and we cannot leap into the unknown; if we do, we are judged as dysfunctional because all our premises are out of context, that is, in order for us to live we must eat; in order to eat we must work, work within the context provided, lest we starve. If we remonstrate with the other in this way, he tells us he is starved for an order of things that bring him even more sustenance than mere food. We argue it is vital to eat food to support the phantoms. He seems unconcerned. "Love Always" is succor enough.

Or perhaps he is not clever with words; perhaps he has developed a natural aphasia in reaction to the feebleness of language to express what is he feels. Our words are lost on him; he will not respond.

Perhaps I am that person upon whom the words are lost.

It takes much vain fortitude to write these words because I jeopardize the rectitude and sanctity of my own life. I expose myself to the judgments of the contextual indictment, the condemnation of the status quo. I will be assessed as crazy. Perhaps. Many fingers pointing in many different directions. The context is as impermanent (impertinent too) as those who enforce (and violate) it.

I will treasure "Love Always" as I treasure what remains of my impotent existence. What I am able to obtain from the context does not measure up; I retain the right to refuse its significances.

## Trees

There might be another interpretation. After a brief message, one might have signed off, almost casually, but wanting something warmer than Yours Truly, but not as pointed as 'Affectionately' or 'Warmest Regards' or 'Remembering You Fondly'. So perhaps something more generic, like the freely used four letter 'Love' followed by an "Always" instead of 'Yours Truly'. One must guess at another's mood; one must translate into metaphor, to idioms, to cultural accretions, to regional usages. In short, can one confine himself within the limited literal view of things? Does one want to believe or does he want to mock those who dare to lack sincerity or are too casual with their representations?

It will not be too difficult to scan the "Love always" for you to assess for your self. Perhaps you are a handwriting analysis expert, a graphologist in the making. Blue marking pen on yellow paper.

Love always

The pretty young woman was graduate student in a field where women were not highly regarded (by those guys with conceits, and other parts). In her required graduate courses she excelled, even where grading curves were used. Her thesis project was one amongst many, requiring many repeated, necessarily reproducible experiments doing basic research in the life sciences. The paths to scientific truth were often tedious, and sometimes involved failure. The young woman was energetic and dedicated, putting long hours day or night as the series of experiments required.

Perhaps I flatter myself too much when I think I had helped her and her other female cohorts, one her mentor, the principle investigator, also fighting her way through the male dominated field (some equipped with flaccid tenures), and her fellow graduate student, another chosen one. I was only another functioning instrument in their high-stakes game of prestigious institutions and grants-in-aid. The search for scientific truth was only part of the story; publish or perish became the motto. Get your doctorate in your mid-twenties to qualify in the competition for postdoctoral fellowships. And so on. Everyone a budding genius. Over a four or five year period of time, I came into contact with their laboratory, located across the hallway from my office, almost on a daily basis during working hours. The doorway was often open, and at times I could hear the hubbub of excitement when experiments worked, and sometimes the groans of disappointment when they failed. A lively and enthusiastic group with lots of *esprit*. And, it was known throughout the institute that one of its major professors had hypothesized that even a zero result possessed a significance beyond failure.

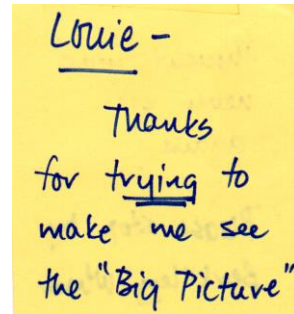
One evening I was summoned to solve a pressing instrument problem unrelated to the laboratory where the young women

## Trees

labored long. While I did not encourage these off hour summons, I did respond often enough to make it easier for the next to ask, when desperation prevailed. On this particular evening, being in my office for part of the time, studying 'schematics', I became aware of the young woman in question emotionally expressing her disappointment over a repeated failure of her experimental procedure. I also became aware that she was alone, by herself in the lab, and that indeed she was moving about in tears, attempting to console herself with less than reassuring words. I dared to look in, whereupon she acknowledged my presence and continued with her soliloquizing. To my question of "What's wrong?" she blurted out an emotional summation of a very unrewarding week, and the consequences of this day which was intended to rectify the loss of the previous days, clearly a failure. Then she became somewhat self-conscious and began to smile making self-effacing remarks through her tears. The conversation waxed philosophical whereupon we discussed her self as the center of the universe, where perhaps what she needed was a different perspective. Important as it was to succeed, it was also important to be all there to enjoy the success. I don't know if the discussion really helped, but she did something graduate students rarely did then, and that was to mention a subordinate in her acknowledgements during the opening remarks of her orals; I was one who came along with timely advise. She was letting me know it meant something to her, something she had not forgotten. We had several other friendly discussions after that traumatic evening, perhaps a crisis evening. I helped many other students perhaps more than her, and perhaps more on a professional level, although I always gave extra effort, but was rarely acknowledged by them in their thesis presentations (only one other time by another feminine graduate, that time regarding my professionalism). One learned to expect very little.

And in the final analysis; where are they all now? More to the point, where is she now, that I might test a thesis. As I write this she would be 46 years of age, five years older than my daughter.

She had come to graduate school married. Both she and her husband had applied to another prestigious institution, more in line with his interests, without success, the details unknown. They arrived on the doorstep of the University perhaps pursuing her interests more than his, itself housing a prestigious institute from which she hoped to gain her doctorate, her husband taking the lesser department which housed another smaller less ambitious institute, but was more akin to his interests. Each was awarded a



Louie -  
Thanks  
for trying to  
make me see  
the "Big Picture"

## **Trees**

degree, a year apart, in their chosen fields; she to follow the high-powered path, and he to follow where he could. Instead he chose to return home to where they had grown up in order to teach, which she did not wish to do so. Thereupon their union ended; a high tithe paid by the successful woman in science. What was lacking?

Anyway I'm getting way off the subject. The vignette might serve to illustrate the futility of certain endeavors.

What is the "Big Picture"? Did I really presume to know the "Big Picture". Perhaps to a receptive needy mind twenty three years younger than myself it seemed so. And perhaps it was so for a time. A way station perhaps. She underlined the word trying; perhaps my success was very limited; perhaps it helped to push her beyond a given obstacle. I departed the University before her graduation, returning solely for it. I have lost her writing upon the occasion of my departure. She had remembered some of the content of our conversations where I expressed a desire to continue with a more creative life. She expressed her wish that I find what I was looking for. Perhaps that too was heart felt; what else could she say? A wish, a dream!

Recently, it seems I have been recalling many earlier experiences with the ladies, not particularly as a litany of conquests or unfulfilled conquests, but as memories that have haunted me. I have not had such experiences with the male contingent. I have had few male friends, none lasting.

Geeeezzzzzzuuuussss, this is getting stale!!!!!!!

Next

I return to the end.

Allowing myself to be distracted yesterday, I had forgotten to save part of what I had written, but had assumed in an absent minded way that I had. So, still distracted when it came to exit the program, when it asked if I wanted to save the changes I answered with No. Stooooooppppiidddd! So I attempted to recall and rewrite what I had written; me at 69, recall!

I did rewrite, and as a form of punishment, like the bad boy who is obliged to write on the blackboard one hundred times "I will not be a bad boy again", here I will find out if I can do it better than the recalled rewrite.

So lets go back to .. *'I retain the right to refuse its significances'*. After rereading, I decided I did not have the energy to do it again; perhaps later. But I will add more conjecture concerning how I might have affected the young woman. From my own experience, I recall perceptive, timely and encouraging words from others. It is perhaps the timing that matters most. Most of us realize quite

## **Trees**

readily and quite easily the bits of advise (indulgences) we receive, because underneath it all we already know. Its just that we are beside ourselves without access to our better sense.

I have often told of the time the psychiatrist made one of those statements that should occur to anyone of normal intelligence without having to be reminded; and such a simple statement: "The real world appears differently to each one of us." It made a difference because of who he was, a friend of the family whom I had visited in a semi-professional way at his home; perhaps I needed guidance or reassurance. But I was predisposed to hear something which I could grasp and hang onto. Purely an intellectual thing; a true succinct statement, if ever there was one, requiring no elaboration. He had also thought I showed some abilities as a writer and suggested reading Melville and Dickens.

Around the same time in my life, nearing the end of my tenure in the Military, while attending evening classes in the History of Philosophy at W&M I met an attractive older woman, of Hawai'ian descent, married to a Commander. Maleka Brown, a name to be remembered. We discussed a range of subjects before and after class; then she invited me to an evening at her home with her husband and herself. She had spoken of an earlier time in her life when she had read so many books, but was regrettably troubled by her inability to remember much of what she had read, because it was in the now she wished she could recall them. She found herself rereading some of the more significant books. It was during these discussions that she freely volunteered an assessment of me, telling me she thought I had an exceptionally fine mind, and that I should develop it and discipline it with great care.

I did not follow her advice, but I do recall the boost.

And there was Edward Aswell, Thomas Wolfe's editor. I had answered an ad in the Saturday Review of Literature wherein an individual was seeking a live-in caretaker, preferably of a writing bent, for a property in Chappaqua, New York. Two months later I received a response, which had followed me through the forwarding of addresses as I made my way around during my early years, after the Military. After meeting him at the Harvard Club in NYC he and I determined that perhaps a person of my varied and unresolved interests (being rather involved with sculpture at the time) might not find enough accommodation at his place in Chappaqua. Instead he offered to get me enrolled in Wolfe's, and I presume his, old alma mater, Harvard. Untimely, because I had already accepted something else involving sculpture. If the response had arrived a month earlier, doubtlessly the outcome would have been different. I might have become a snob instead of an idiot, if one can possibly tell the difference between the two.

## **Trees**

Timely and untimely. Regardless, father was in the background, making one helluva mess of my life.

I can imagine we all have had our little boosts at some point in our lives. As we grow older there are fewer and fewer boosts. We become our sole booster. Not entirely; last year it was genuinely offered by another (lady) that I had a 'brilliant mind'. An unsolicited comment that came about as a result of letter that I had written to essentially a dying man, her cousin. I did think it a good letter, one of those with which one struggles to find the right words, written more to a stranger than a friend. An effusive Thank You from a cousin. I might have thought less of it, more of an impotent gesture toward one who had every reason to live, but was beyond saving. What appropriate words exist for such occasions? I was willing to try to find some. Perhaps a 'brilliant mind', but, in reality, perhaps only someone who found the courage to speak, creating thereby, a human document.

The recurring dream, modified. Actually, two dreams telescoped into one. The same large building which seems to be our residence, unfinished. Beneath the building is an immense slab of concrete raised a foot above the ground. To look underneath the slab has inspired fear; of death, of course; claustrophobia. In two previous dreams, I have been beneath the slab, terrified, then acquiescent to my own death, relieved of something. The large building has many windows, perhaps like any modern building. The unfinished walls are covered by the packing material of many solar panels, which seem to be hermetically sealed in the concrete slab; a fact that doesn't make any sense. That empty place is suddenly transformed into the large open spaces of the science building in which I worked for many years. There are people there, there is artificial lighting, there are colors, and a lot of non-specific details. However I am there as an adjunct presence serving no purpose. I have a corner in a glassed-in booth with a laptop computer. Later in this evolving dream, I am outside the house of a former employee of the science department in which we both worked for years; she has lost weight, significantly, and has seemingly recovered from her manic-depression. There is some kind of celebration or party taking place inside her home; it is nighttime.

We had watched *Box Of Moonlight* on the previous evening with wine and popcorn, by the sea, with some islanders who would be leaving the next morning for two years away. Earlier in the day some not-so-close neighbors had returned a borrowed DVD, and while having some tea, the conversation turned to naps. They took naps. I didn't, but rarely when very tired, usually late in the afternoon. From the nap discussion evolved a discussion of regrets;



## **Trees**

regretting one did this or that or did not do this or that. I told how when involved in a project, I tended to push myself to its completion, hence naps were a luxury that interfered with progress. They spoke of being refreshed by their naps. I did not disagree. I finally stated that there are all kinds of regrets in this life. Regretting that one has not napped is one of them. Perhaps they will live longer than I because they have napped. If I die sooner than they, I will not have regrets because I will be dead. If I had presence of mind before I died, I might regret that I worked so hard without taking naps. But how would I truly know if taking naps might have extended my tenure. They seem to feel they will live longer if they take naps.

When I do eventually go to sleep at night sometimes dreams like the foregoing overtake my sleep. Sometimes I do not sleep very well, especially after having been awakened when Charline gets up to pee in the middle of the night. I am taking medications for my health, which might have been severely impaired by the lack of naps. One of the medications indicates one might suffer with insomnia. I am not often visited by dreams so described in the foregoing, but I would prefer medications that would produce such dreams rather than extend my life with medications that produce insomnia. I cannot dream if I am awake. I can fantasize, but that gets old, unless I get out of bed to go to the computer to write them down. Some of them are so embarrassing, they could not stand the light of day without staining my posterity. As you know, any stain, like the stain on Moniker Lewinsky's dress, live after one. You know the famous line, 'I have come to bury Louie, not to praise him'. People, like Presidents, are not immune; all humans are human after all. So find something nice to say.